1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

THE KASKA PEOPLE

144 Physically, the Kaska are American Indians with considerable white admixture. In skin
142 color the Kaska range from the light tan of *métis* to medium brown. In spring when the people return to the post their faces often show blanched spots, apparently the marks of severe frostbite. The eyes are characteristically black, although brown and blue eyes occur in children of *métis*, and exhibit the epicanthic fold. Two men were noted who had rims of blue around the dark irises. The hair is generally straight, black, and thick. Old men and women have their hair streaked with gray. Bodily hair is normally light. Stature ranges from medium to small; obesity is infrequent. The faces of most of the people are relaxed and calm but otherwise expressionless, except when they smile or laugh (Pls. 2 and 3). Some individuals have sharp and pinched features, giving the impression of considerable inner tension.

145 As far as could be observed, the physical development and maturation of the Kaska child parallel that of American children, and are subject to the same vicissitudes when neglect and ill-treatment occur in infancy.[4] For example, at eighteen months Lenny Lang walked, but without perfect coordination, showing a tendency to run. He had four middle incisors, four lateral incisors, and four molars. He did not yet talk. At eleven months Terese Donnelly sat erect, crawled a little when permitted, and had four teeth—the two lower incisors and the two upper canines. She could pull herself into a sitting position by holding onto a support. At four months Sonny Maza smiled, kicked his legs, and showed one tooth just appearing. On the other hand, Irma, the daughter of Irene Wiley, who was starved and neglected during her first six or eight months of life, at twenty-one months pulled herself upright holding on, crawled and smiled but could not stand alone nor talk. Her teeth seemed normal. Old Man reported that little children, from about one to two years of age, are eager to pull off their clothing, a phenomenon also noted in American society.

Menarche occurs between fourteen and fifteen years, several girls having developed pregnancies between fifteen and sixteen years of age. The age of senile impotence could not be established, but may be inferred as occurring relatively late since River Joe, aged about sixty-three, complained of unsatisfied sexual desire following the death of his wife while Old Kean, aged seventy-four, tried to persuade a woman to live with him and actually lived with her for a week or so during the summer. One woman, aged forty-five, several times manifested strong sexual drive during intoxication. In appearance, women age quickly. No signs of senility were manifested by any of the two or three men aged sixty and over. Such signs, however, were observed in one woman, Old Metsa, whose age was about seventy.

● 161 A tabulation of population figures for the Dease River, Upper Liard, and Nelson River Indians is shown in Table 2. Little reliance can be placed on the accuracy of reports before 1944, since no distinctions were made between tribal groups. All figures are from the Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs,[5] unless otherwise specified.

In 1945, the ethnographer estimated the population of the four Kaska tribes to total

[4] See Gesell and Ilg, *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today* (1943).

[5] Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs* (1914-1934).

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

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TABLE 2. KASKA POPULATION

Tribe	1875	1887	1914	1917	1924	1928[8]	1929	1934	1944[12]
Dease Lake	105[6]	70[7]	70	70	64	150	64	137[10]	74
Upper Liard and Frances Lake			79	84	82	80	80	95	42[13]
Nelson River			89	106	123		141[9]	91[11]	59
Total			238	260	269		285	323	175

about 200.[14] Mooney estimated 500 for the aboriginal population of the total Kaska area.[15] Although it cannot be denied that Kaska population has suffered some decline since 1840, the magnitude of this seems exaggerated. We doubt that the aboriginal population exceeded 300.

About 50 per cent of the Kaska are adults over sixteen years of age (Table 3). Adult males slightly exceed adult females, the ratio being 1:.725. Among children, girls are more numerous than boys by a ratio of 1:1.175. During the period from June 1944 to July 1945 we noted eleven births which suggests a birth rate of at least 55 per 1000 population. Of these births five, or about 45 per cent, occurred in spring. Seven were female and four male. The

TABLE 3. AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION—MARCH 31, 1944

Tribe	Men	Women	Children Under 16		Total
			Boys	Girls	
Dease River	20	14	16	24	74
Upper Liard	14	9	8	11	42
Nelson River	17	14	16	12	59
Total	51	37	40	47	175

[6] French and Ware, *British Columbia Posts; No. 7, McDame's Creek Post* (1923–24), 395.

[7] Dawson, *Report of an Exploration in the Yukon District* (1887–1888), 200. This reference, like the preceding, is to Indians trading at McDame Post and no tribal specifications are given.

[8] Allard, *Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians* (1928), 24. The author confesses that his estimate of 150 people trading at McDame Creek probably includes Sekani and Nelson Indians.

[9] The constantly rising population of the Nelson Indians seems to point to a confusion of Nelson and adjacent Sekani people like the Tsetsaut.

[10] This figure probably includes forty odd Indians classified as "Grahame Nomads" in earlier reports, and this term probably refers to the Tsetsaut.

[11] The reference is to "Nomadic McDame and Liard District."

[12] Canada, *Stikine Indian Agency Census* (1944).

[13] Includes only three Frances Lake Indians.

[14] This figure is based on the 175 people trading into Lower Post and listed in the government's census of 1944 plus an estimated thirty Frances Lake Indians for whom no census data could be obtained. The figure does not include the Espatotena.

[15] Kroeber, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (1939), 141.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12

manuscript of Poole Field, a band of Mackenzie Indians wiped out the original Pelly and Ross River populations about 1886. One or two survivors found refuge with the Frances Lake people, some of whom extended themselves northward. Their descendants are today in possession of the Pelly drainage basin. Teslin Lake Indians (Taku?) also moved in to the country vacated by the autochthonous Pelly population.[39] In the field the present writer heard that the establishment of a trading post at Ross River in about 1898 caused some Indians to leave off trading at Lower Post and to take up trapping around Frances Lake. They went to trade at Ross River post where prices were lower. The movement north included Indians like Old Ceasar and coincided with the Yukon gold rush, when a horse trail was cut from Lower Post across the divide separating Frances Lake from Pelly River.

To the northeast the Frances Lake Kaska bordered on the territory of the Mackenzie River People, the Klukotena. To the east and southeast the Espatotena adjoined the Beaver Indians, Tsapagotena, of the lower Liard, and the Fort Nelson Slave, Etcaʔotena (synonymy: Atcotena "People Who Hunt in a Brushy Place," and Gutzitotena, "People Who Work all the Time.") The Atcotena obviously correspond to Petitot's Étca-cttinè, "gens a l'abri."[40] On the south the Kaska contacted that branch of the Sekani known as the Bear Lake Indians. In recent years this tribe has penetrated far down the Kechika River, almost to the Liard, and came to trade at McDame Creek as well as at Fort Ware.[41] Considerable intermarriage has occurred between the Kaska and Bear Lake people. In Kaska their name is rendered Sastotena (synonymy: Sateune; Tsekona, "Mountain People"; Satelune; Sazeootina; Sazentina; and Sezotena). The frequency of intermarriage and the penetration of the Liard country by the Bear Lake are probably jointly responsible for the frequency with which these people have been included in the Kaska nation. Moderately strong differences in dialect[42] plus the fact that Jenness has already grouped them with the Sekani[43] recommend their exclusion from the Kaska category. The Bear Lakers' movement down the Kechika probably followed the closing of their trading post, Fort Connell, on Bear Lake at the head of the Skeena River, in 1890.

Apart from these Athapaskan speaking neighbors the Kaska aboriginally also knew the troublesome Cree Indians, teciina, "They Hide Themselves."

POPULATION

Few helpful data are available with which to estimate the aboriginal population of the Kaska tribes. Kroeber, following Mooney, gives a population of 500. Since he allots a somewhat smaller area to the nation than we do his density figure of 1.00 per hundred

[39] Jenness, *Indians of Canada* (1932), 396.

[40] Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 24–25; cf. Petitot, *Autour du grand lac des Esclaves* (1891), 363; also pp. 344–358.

[41] See Hunter, *Frances Lake, Yukon* (1924), 98; Stanwell-Fletcher, *Naturalists in the Wilds of British Columbia* (1940).

[42] See below p. 80. A Frances Lake youth said he could understand hardly a word of Bear Lake.

[43] Jenness, *Sekani Indians of British Columbia* (1937), 9–10.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12

161 square kilometers probably needs reduction if it is to conform to the Cassiar as we have defined it.[44] Available information concerning population movements in the early contact period has been presented in another monograph and need not be repeated here.[45]

PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES

157 It is manifestly impossible to utilize direct observation as a method for learning the personal characteristics of the aboriginal Kaska Indians. Such a picture, it cannot be denied, would give depth to the cultural reconstruction that we intend to present. One means of gauging the personality of a past people is to rely on the impressions of early travelers. Such visitors may not have had contact with the Kaska but with their neighbors and so it must be assumed that relatively common behavior patterns obtained throughout a relatively large culture area. Personal observations by the writer and recent psychological studies by Hallowell, Caudill, Barnouw, and others suggest that the facts support an assumption of behavioral homogeneity in the northern forest, although differences can certainly be discovered even between adjacent tribes or nations. Richardson has given a very full and intimate impression of the Dogrib. He says:[46]

> Few traces of the stoicism popularly attributed to the red races exist among the Dog-ribs: they shrink from pain, show little daring, express their fears without disguise on all occasions, imaginary or real, shed tears readily, and live in constant dread of enemies, bodied and disembodied. Yet all, young and old, enjoy a joke heartily. They are not a morose people but, on the contrary, when young and in a situation of security, they are remarkably lively and cheerful. The infirmities of age, which press heavily on the savage, render them querulous.

According to Dawson, "the Kaska have the reputation of being a very timid people and they are rather undersized and have a poor physique. They are lazy and untrustworthy."[47]

828 Another means of securing personality data suggested itself in the course of field work. What could a sophisticated informant say about aboriginal character types? Asked to describe some "old fashioned" individuals an Upper Liard informant provided the following patterns:

"Quiet man" (maza'unt'etena). Such a person spoke infrequently and briefly. However excessive taciturnity disturbed other people. A man who didn't speak for two or three days was suspected of holding murderous intentions toward somebody.

"Highest man talking" (maza'anu'utiihüitena). This refers to a man capable of many tasks and confident enough in his ability to see that other people became aware of his capacities.

"He knows everything man" (enatayatiihüitena). Very few people in the aboriginal community measured up to this type, a man skillful in providing all the implements and apparatus needed for making a living and doing all of the required tasks with consummate skill.

[44] Kroeber, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (1939), 141.
[45] Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society* (1949), 37.
[46] Richardson, *Arctic Searching Expedition* (1852), 250.
[47] Dawson, *Report of an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T.* (1887–88), 200.

7: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1947
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Cordillera live the Taku Indians. Beyond these, bordering the Pacific, are the Tlingit.

The total population of the Kaska probably never numbered more than about three or four hundred persons. Today about two hundred people constitute the tribes lying between the two mountain ranges.[3]

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Fur traders established their first contacts with the Kaska east of the Rocky Mountains shortly after 1800. In 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company built a post west of the mountains (Fort Halkett) and in 1838 another at Dease Lake. Frances Lake post was founded in 1840. It must be pointed out that these meetings with traders were not soon followed by missionary contact as was the rule in many other parts of the Northern Athapaskan area. In 1872 the discovery of gold along Dease River brought a great influx of miners into the country, most of whom traveled up the Stikine waterway, crossed the portage from Telegraph Creek in Tahltan Indian country, and then went down Dease Lake and River. By 1876 the white population in the latter drainage basin is estimated to have reached about 2,000 people, including a large number of Chinese laborers. By 1887, however, the strangers had nearly all disappeared although a number of Chinese remained to work abandoned bearings. In 1897 and 1898 a second wave of miners entered the area, this time en route to the Klondike gold fields which, because of the exigencies of the climate, many were never to reach. As a result of the large population in these periods trading posts came to be established at the confluence of McDame Creek and Dease River and, shortly before 1890, another where the Dease meets the Liard, the so-called Lower Post.

Certain concomitants of these early contacts have a bearing on the present problem. From the traders and other white men the Kaska were introduced to new varieties of food, tools, and shelter as well as to attitudes that undermined many aboriginal beliefs and behaviors. New semi-permanently occupied shelters, like log cabins, were introduced but do not appear to have taken serious hold until about twenty years ago. Previous to that time, life history data reveal, mobility was still largely maintained with a consequent dependence on temporary camps and game and fish rather than on stores of white food accumulated for winter consumption. Even today the Frances Lake Indians retain considerable dependence on environmental resources, food being highly expensive in a remote outpost like Frances Lake which receives most of its supplies by air. The principal beliefs disappearing before the ridicule of the whites pertained to religion, shamanism, and sorcery. War, of course, was abandoned early in the contact period. Something of the character of the people's reaction to the growing domination of the white society may be

[3] Canada, 1944. Only one or two Frances Lake Indians are included in this census.